

Historical and Cultural Resources Working Group
October 12, 2018
8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.
Arlington Town Hall, First Floor Conference Room
MEETING SUMMARY

Attendees: Pete Howard, JoAnn Robinson, Dianne Schaefer, Steve Makowka, Kelly Lynema

Guests: Kathy Broomer

Kathy opened the meeting and thanked the group for meeting to discuss ideas for areas, structures, and features to be included in the Phase 2 Report, the next deliverable for the Survey Master Plan project. The consultants have begun work on Phase 2, but did not want to move forward too far without input from the working group; feedback provided in this meeting will form the meat of the survey recommendations. In Phase 3, the consultants will take the list of items generated in Phase 2 and assign priorities – short-, medium-, and long-term – for implementation.

The group then discussed potential factors that influence selection:

- Identifying specific individual structures vs. entire neighborhoods to preserve historical character
- Houses and structures by known architects
- Homes, areas, or zoning districts at risk for demolitions
- Areas where a historic district should be established

A number of areas and neighborhoods were discussed as potential areas for inclusion. Kathy asked whether the Pleasant Street corridor should be included. Steve recommended Hendersonville, as East Arlington has been underrepresented in prior lists, and there is some local interest in begin added. JoAnn agreed, mentioning that there were interns from UMass studying the area; she has historical maps, oral histories, and other documentation from their work that could be valuable moving forward.

Kathy stated that the MHC preferred method for documenting clusters is area forms, a method that is currently infrequently used in Arlington. She suggested that establishing areas allows for general identification of a cluster of structures, so that the group can inventory specific homes within that area later on as funding allows. JoAnn mentioned that years ago the group had started with areas, specifically Kensington Park, although she believed the areas were still changing, citing that the Commission gets four or five requests a year for additions or alterations to homes in that neighborhood. She recommended that Kensington Park and Morningside be considered for the list for these reasons, as well as to provide greater representation to the north.

Kathy asked if a number of other areas should be included: Mass Ave, Gray Street, the neighborhood between Medford Street and Mt. Pleasant Cemetery, Jackson Heights, and some

scattered streets such as Lombard Road and Lombard Terrace. The group concurred that these areas should be included. JoAnn requested that Kelwyn Manor be reexamined for inclusion as well. She also requested that Hillside, Claremont, and several houses above Gray Street should be considered. Diane added that Turkey Hill should also be included. The group also suggested that Robin Hood Road and the general vicinity along the Mystic Lakes be considered.

Pete said that it is his impression that the teardown threat is widespread, and wondered if inclusion in an area would protect individual homes. A discussion was then had about the impact of including areas in the inventory. Kathy mentioned that Arlington was one of the first towns to make use of identifying areas prior to protecting structures. If a home sits within a designated area, it is on the Massachusetts Historical Commission inventory, though individual buildings in the area would not be considered significant (and therefore subject to the demolition review bylaw) until a finding of significance is made by the Arlington Historical Commission and the buildings are added to the Arlington Historical Commission's list of historically or architecturally significant buildings (i.e. demolition review list).

JoAnn suggested that the consultants also look at the ages of homes in Arlington to identify clusters of homes for consideration. Kathy said that the master plan does include a map of structures in the town by age, although she understood that there may be some inaccuracies in the data. She also mentioned that Richard had suggested looking at R2 zones, as those seem to be receiving the most tear-down requests.

Additional landscapes for inclusion were discussed, specifically Elizabeth Island and Mill Brook. Steve suggested that including areas where Mill Brook is daylighted should be considered as a minimum. Kathy agreed, adding that there could be a recommendation to do an above and below-ground survey for Mill Brook. Some towns receive MHC grant funds to do archeological surveys, and Mill Brook – and possibly Elizabeth Island – could be good candidates for this. Kathy asked if Spy Pond Field Stadium should be considered as well; the group agreed.

Additional structures discussed for inclusion were outdoor sculptures, the segment of railroad track at Whittemore Park, and the lawn in front of the high school. This led to a discussion of the high school and its adjacent lawn being added to the list, and the difficulties in getting protections in place for both areas given the timing of the new high school project. Steve mentioned that the new high school will be built on the existing lawn before the old high school is demolished.

Pete requested that the group review what was approved for this project at Town Meeting; that this was a three part grant which included funding for a historic structure report for the Arlington High School Building.

Kathy raised a separate issue regarding discrepancies in the State database. Nat Strosberg had sent her a spreadsheet of all properties in the database, with three different notations about discrepancies: spelling, address, and records (the most common discrepancy). She asked the group if anyone knew who had authored the original list. Kelly said she would check with the

Planning and Community Development Department, and Kathy said she would check back with Mass Historic to see if they knew. One of the consultant recommendations will likely be to resolve any discrepancies between Town and State records, but she wants to make sure their recommendations are workable with the group's budget and time restrictions. Steve mentioned that there is a high school class working with the GIS department on a project, so it may be possible to come up with a creative solution for completing projects like this.

The meeting closed with a discussion on how the current condition of a resource affects its ability to get on the list of consultant recommendations for additions to the MHC inventory. Kathy said that typically, historic integrity drives inclusion – they're looking at the historic integrity of a building regardless of its physical condition. Steve wanted to make sure that superficial additions and minor alterations such as vinyl siding (especially in cases where the detailing was preserved underneath) would not preclude a structure from being included on the list.

Group members were instructed to send any additional recommendations for areas, structures, or landscapes to be considered for Phase 2 to Kelly before October 31. Kelly will consolidate comments from the group and submit them to the consultant.

The next meeting will be to review the draft Phase 2 report. Kathy will provide a list of February meeting dates and Kelly will distribute a doodle poll to the group to set the meeting.

Steve noted that a discussion of documentation of the high school was missing from the minutes of the September 26 meeting, and made a motion to accept the meeting minutes subject to an amendment that the discussion be added. Pete seconded. JoAnn, Dianne, and Kelly abstained from voting. The remainder of those in attendance voted in favor of approval.

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